

## SCIENCE

Demonstrates understanding of key concepts

Score

I

Asks relevant questions and makes thoughtful comments

V

Accurately collects, records, and analyzes data

CS

## EFFORT

PW

## SOCIAL STUDIES

Score

Demonstrates understanding of key concepts

S

Interprets and analyzes information

NI

Asks relevant questions and makes thoughtful comments

WI

## EFFORT

S

## Alphabet Soup

I

Independent

V

Developing

CS

Consistently Strong

PW

Progressing Well

S

Satisfactory

NI

Needs Improvement

WI

Working On It

# Decoding Teacher Talk

## "Needs redirection"

*It Usually Means:* She's up to doing the task but needs help staying focused. They tend to say this about overly active or easily distracted kids.

## "Has difficulty making transitions"

*It Usually Means:* Your antsy kid holds up the class by not putting away her stuff when asked or can't resist touching everything on her way to the rug for the morning meeting.

## "Uses a lot of strategies to decode words in books"

*It Usually Means:* He's coming along but still needs a variety of tools to figure out a new word—like looking for clues in the picture.

## "Has trouble with bodily control"

*It Usually Means:* She has no sense of personal space—she may touch other students too much, or her legs are all over the place. It can also mean she flails around when mad.

## "Does well when he focuses"

*It Usually Means:* Your grade-schooler needs help settling down to work or listening because he's too distracted—by himself or by others.

## "Needs encouragement to work and play with others"

*It Usually Means:* Your child is probably having a tough time getting along with her classmates.

divided into at least three separate skills: listening/speaking, reading, and writing (and sometimes even spelling). Your child won't be given one global grade for reading, but several, depending on the teacher's expectations: Is he reading by himself, or does he need a lot of help? Does the teacher have to choose books for him, or can he do that on his own?

The challenge for teachers is how to indicate progress, especially at the start of the school year. "This is something teachers struggle with, so parents need to ask the teacher how she determines it," says Scoggin. Some schools will add pluses and minuses. That way, it's a little easier to tell how your child is doing with respect to the teacher's expectations: 3+ means he's more advanced than expected, while 2- means he's not that far along.

A teacher may give a second-grader a 2 at the start of the year, but she isn't worried because she knows that student is grasping concepts quickly. Or the child may not quite have reached expectations, but is working hard. In that case, the teacher would likely give a 2 and talk about the child's effort in the

comments. That's why all report cards come with comments—and are often timed to coincide with parent-teacher conferences once or twice a year.

## Socially Speaking

For children in the early grades, school is more than just academics—it's learning a slew of social skills that help them become better students. This is why your child also receives grades for her work habits and behavior. The teacher looks at how she works and plays with others, how well she handles transitions (is it easy for her to put away her journal and move on to math, or does she get stuck on one subject?), and if she's able to control her feelings (based on her age, of course). One thing to keep in mind: "Being naughty once or twice doesn't warrant a mention in the report card," says Scoggin. If your child is having a chronic behavior problem, then it will be put in writing (and it shouldn't come as a surprise). If your child melts down once or twice because she got overly engrossed in writing a story and didn't want to stop, the teacher will just mention it at pickup or in an e-mail.

